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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

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Questions and Answers

**Question:** What is the Competitive Communities Initiative (CCI)?

**Answer:** The Competitive Communities Initiative is a program administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) designed to assist local communities in their business and community development efforts. CCI staff provide assistance by facilitating a community's development process.

**Question:** Who leads the local CCI effort?

**Answer:** The local community. Communities are in the best position to positively affect their own futures.

**Question:** How does the program work?

**Answer:** The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity assigns a CCI Specialist to work with the local community in the CCI process. This includes assistance in developing a local leadership structure, conducting a community self-assessment and preparing a written action plan that identifies the community's goals, priorities and the actions needed to attain these goals. In addition, CCI specialists serve as a link to the community in identifying private and government agencies that can provide technical assistance and resources.

**Question:** How much does it cost?

**Answer:** CCI assistance is provided free to participating communities. The local sponsors pay for incidental expenses that arise. The most significant cost is time committed by local leaders and volunteers.

**Question:** What is the finished product?

**Answer:** A locally developed written action plan that outlines the steps needed to strengthen the community's business and community development efforts.

**Question:** How do we participate?

**Answer:** Communities are selected on a competitive basis. To be considered for participation in the CCI program, a representative of the community must attend an application workshop and an application must be submitted by the designated due date. If interested in attending an application workshop, please complete and return the attached form. An invitation to upcoming application workshops will be sent to the person submitting the form.

## **DCEO Provides:**

- A CCI staff person who will serve as a community's facilitator/guide and resource person.
- Criteria to help the community conduct a community-wide selfassessment
- Assistance with drafting a memorandum of understanding between the community, DCEO and any third parties.
- Linkage to technical resources, funding sources, and private or governmental agencies
- Long-term follow-up service to participating communities

Please complete request form and return to:
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity CCI Program 620 East Adams Street Springfield, Illinois 62701
Or call 217/558-4223; TDD 217/785-6055.
Yes I am interested. Please send me additional information.
Add my name to the CCI application workshop mailing list.
Community:
Contact Person:
Organization:
Address:
E-mail address:
Phone Number ()
Communities will be selected on a competitive basis. Need, organization, potential for success and other factors may be considered.

## **DCEO's Competitive** Communities Initiative

Why has CCI been developed?

Research and experience show that there is a direct link between the economic well-being of a state and the ability of its communities to compete with similar communities. DCEO believes that the most important step a community can take is to perform a rigorous self-assessment that identifies the community's leadership, strengths, needs, and resources needed to attract and retain the investment necessary to support a high quality of life. The assessment is then developed into a written action/implementation plan that serves as a blueprint for the future. Through extensive research, DCEO identified six basic "Foundations for Growth" that, when addressed by communities, will ensure a comprehensive self-assessment. These foundations are:

- A Skilled and Adaptive Workforce
- Access to Technology & **Business Modernization** Resources
- Access to Capital for Business **Growth and Expansion**
- Basic & Advanced Infrastructure
- **Pro-Competitive Business** Policies
- Social Infrastructure

## Is your Community ready for the 21st Century?

Today's fast paced society requires communities to be ready to respond to a multitude of problems and opportunities in a prompt and meaningful fashion. Competitive communities take a leadership role in determining their own futures; they know where they want to go, and have developed a community consensus.

The Competitive Communities Initiative (CCI) can help your community become competitive. CCI is a dynamic, hands-on project. It can help your community to prosper in the 21st Century.

The success of a community's CCI project will depend entirely on the efforts that the community is willing to make.

Communities don't have to compete with one another, but they do need to be competitive.



Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Jack Lavin, Director

